

**PLUMACHER, EUGENE HERMANN  
PAPERS  
1877-1947**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

These are the papers and memoirs of Eugene H. Plumacher, Consul of the United States of America to Venezuela, 1877-1890. Some of these papers were purchased from Plumacher's grandson, Eugene H. Bohr; the addition of 1970 was donated by Mrs. Gerald Henderson, Nashville, Tennessee. Two letters written by Plumacher to Morton B. Howell and given to the State Library and Archives by Miss Isabel Howell (granddaughter of Morton B. Howell) have been added to the collection.

The collection occupies 1.3 cubic feet of shelf space and numbers approximately 740 items. Literary rights to the unpublished writings of Eugene H. Plumacher in this collection and other collections of papers in the custody of the Tennessee State Library and Archives have been dedicated to the public. Single photocopies of unpublished writings may be made for purposes of scholarly research.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

### **Eugene H. Plumacher memoirs, 1877-1890**

The memoirs of Eugene H. Plumacher, 1877-1890, composed of six hundred forty eight pages, deal with his experiences during the thirteen years he was United States Consul at Maracaibo, Venezuela.

Born in Prussia, Eugene Hermann Plumacher immigrated to the United States with several of his countrymen and established a Swiss colony at (Gruetli) Beersheba Springs, Tennessee. In 1877, after receiving encouragement from Tennessee Governor James D. Porter and Secretary of State Joseph B. Killebrew, he journeyed to Washington, D.C., hoping to obtain an appointment to a European Consulate in an effort to encourage immigration to the South.

In his memoirs, Plumacher describes the hordes of office seekers milling about the nation's capital. In recounting his interviews with President Benjamin Harrison and Secretary Evarts, he noted that they were not inclined to appoint him to the anticipated post. Instead of a European appointment, he was appointed to the consulate at Maracaibo, Venezuela.

Soon after his arrival in Maracaibo, he was stricken with yellow fever and narrowly escaped death. When he recovered he assumed his duties as consul only to find the job full of problems and needing a complete re-organization.

Plumacher witnessed the Revolution of 1879 and he related many episodes and incidents which occurred during these perilous times. His memoirs contain the names of the following Venezuelan leaders: General Regino Diaz, Guzman Blanco, Edward Lopez Rivas, General Diaz Bravo, General Lutowsky, General Venancio Pulgar, Simon Camacho, President Crespo, Dr. Rojas Paul, General Paez, General Urdaneta, General Bernado Finedo Velasco, General Chavez, Dr. Alejandro Andrade, General Gonzales, Dr. Francisco Suarez, Dr. Trinidad Montiel, Mr. Leonidas Vargas, and General Ramon Arjola.

In addition to the memoirs, two letters written by E.H. Plumacher to Morton B. Howell, have been added to the collection. These letters contain information about conditions in Venezuela in 1902.

### **Eugene H. Plumacher Papers--Addition (1970)**

This addition to the papers of Eugene H. Plumacher includes forty-nine letters written by Plumacher to his friend, Morton B. Howell of Nashville, Tennessee, covering the years 1886 through 1907. In a letter dated 1893, Plumacher commented on the United States losing trade with Venezuela because of the extra duty on Venezuelan products. In 1894 he recorded that business lost by the United States was being picked up by Germany. In 1901, he wrote of the government in Columbia; in 1902, about the war with Columbia and its effect on U.S. commerce; and in 1906-1907, he wrote that foreign capital would not invest in Venezuela with Castro in power.

Included is Plumacher's report on the Perija Railroad and its effort to open up the district south of Maracaibo on the same side of the lake known as "Perija,"--a land rich in timber, minerals, and asphaltum. There are two memoranda written by Plumacher covering political events in Venezuela from December 10, 1902, to February 15, 1903; reports on the

success of his medical treatment of lepers; his will; and an autobiography. There are newspapers dated October 2 and September 29, 1894 (El Relator), which contain editorials on his medical work in Venezuela. There are two letters from Dagmar (Plumacher) Bohr, March 13, 1902, relative to reselling the Plumacher land near Beersheba Springs, Tennessee. A letter dated March 14, 1947, contains a short sketch of Plumacher.

Also included are four letters from Tennessee Governor James D. Porter (1828-1912) written on his way to and in Chile, promising to write the U.S. State Department on Plumacher's behalf. Additionally, there are two U.S. pamphlets on the act making appropriations for diplomatic and consular service for 1895 and for 1905; an agreement in regard to the construction of a railroad to Perija, Venezuela; and a power of attorney given to Morton B. Howell by Plumacher, dated September 4, 1906.

## CONTAINER LIST

### **BOX 1**

<u>Folder No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	Correspondence--Plumacher, Eugene H.	1901-1902
2	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter I	1877-1890
3	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter II	1877-1890
4	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter III	1877-1890
5	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter IV	1877-1890
6	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter V	1877-1890
7	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter VI	1877-1890
8	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter VII	1877-1890
9	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter VIII	1877-1890
10	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter IX	1877-1890
11	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter X	1877-1890
12	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XI	1877-1890
13	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XII	1877-1890
14	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XIII	1877-1890
15	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XIV	1877-1890
16	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XV	1877-1890

### **Box Number 2**

<u>Folder No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XVI	1877-1890
2	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XVII	1877-1890
3	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XVIII	1877-1890
4	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XIX	1877-1890
5	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XX	1877-1890
6	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXI	1877-1890
7	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXII	1877-1890
8	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXIII	1877-1890
9	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXIV	1877-1890
10	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXV	1877-1890
11	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXVI	1877-1890
12	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXVII	1877-1890
13	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXVIII	1877-1890
14	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXIX	1877-1890
15	Plumacher Memoirs, Chapter XXX	1877-1890

### **Box Number 3**

<u>Folder No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Dates</u>
1	Agreements--Republic of Venezuela	n.d.
2	Sketches--Biographical--Plumacher, Eugene H.	n.d.
3	Clippings, newspaper	1902-1903
4	Correspondence--Bohr, Dagmar (Plumacher)	1902-1947
5	Correspondence, miscellaneous	1894-1897
6	Correspondence--Plumacher, Eugene H.	1886-1898
7	Correspondence--Plumacher, Eugene H.	1901-1907
8	Correspondence--Porter, James David	1887-1893
9	Memoranda	1903-1904
10	Newspapers-- <u>El Relator</u> ca. 1894 (caution: newspapers are brittle)	
11	Pamphlets--U.S. Government--Acts of Congress	1895, 1905
12	Reports, Medical--Republic of Venezuela	ca. 1894
13	Reports--Perija Railroad n.d.	
14	Wills--Plumacher, Eugene Hermann	ca. 1864

## **SUBJECT INDEX**

Eugene H. Plumacher Memoirs  
1877-1890

The memoirs of Eugene Hermann Plumacher were obtained by purchase from his grandson, Eugene H. Bohr. The manuscript is composed of thirty chapters, six hundred forty eight pages, dealing with the experiences of Plumacher from the time he made his decision to seek the office of Consul until his recall--

a period of thirteen years. Plumacher had hoped to obtain a consulate in Europe but was sent to Maracaibo, Venezuela instead. A brief summary of the chapters are as follows:

### **Box Number 1**

<u>Folder No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
2	<b>Chapter I:</b> review of author's reasons for soliciting a consular appointment; reminiscences of Governor Porter of Tennessee and endorsement of application by him and other State officials; arrival at Washington and interviews with President Hayes and Secretary Evarts. Pages 1-23.



## Chapter description continued:

- 3        **Chapter II:** delay in making appointment; types of office seekers besieging Department of State; consular appointee locked in Department Building; methods of appointing Consuls; disinclination of the President and Mr. Evarts to appoint Plumacher to a post where he might attract immigration to the South. Pages 23-50.
- 4        **Chapter III:** accepts offer of post at Maracaibo, Venezuela; incidents of the trip; arrival at San Juan de Porto Rico; three American brides visiting for the first time the native land of their husbands. Pages 50-76.
- 5        **Chapter IV:** trip from Porto Rico to Caracas via St. Thomas and La Guayra; beauties of Caracas, the capital of the Republic; interview with President Alcaubora; meeting with John Baker, A.S. Minister. Pages 76-98.
- 6        **Chapter V:** trip on "Bermuda" from Caracas to La Guayra; visit to San Estiban; board another steamer for Curacao and after pleasant stay takes final voyage for Maracaibo in steamer "Pico." Pages 98-116.
- 7        **Chapter VI:** incidents of voyage from Curacao; description of Fort San Carlos; Lake passage from San Carlos to city; arrival at Maracaibo and installation in the Hotel Italia. Pages 116-130.
- 8        **Chapter VII:** description of the Hotel Italia; first impressions of Maracaibo; yellow fever; narrow escape from death. Pages 130-158.
- 9        **Chapter VIII:** convalescence; assumption of Consular duties; comparison between situation of U.S.; representatives with other countries comments upon Consular system and suggestions for its improvement. Pages 158-183.
- 10       **Chapter IX:** reorganization of the Consulate; efforts of Merchants to remove Consul; sustained by the Department; meeting of the crew of the brig. "Alcira." Pages 183-203.
- 11       **Chapter X:** story of crime on board German vessel; removal of Consular Office to better quarters; night of flood; Consul's zoological collection. Pages 203-229.





## Chapter description continued:

- 12      **Chapter XI:** incident's of the Revolution of 1879; forcible enlistments at Maracaibo; many Dutch subjects from Curacao; released through intervention of U.S. Consul; episode of the British steamer "Livingston." Pages 229-249.
- 13      **Chapter XII:** Revolutionary episodes; incident of the steamer, "Livingston;" General Regino Diaz, president for a few days. Pages 249-269.
- 14      **Chapter XIII:** trip to hear of the great lake of Maracaibo and up the Escalaube River; visits to towns of San Carlos, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz; Captain James Williams loses an arm. Pages 269-284.
- 15      **Chapter XIV:** yellow fever epidemic; mortality among the foreign shipping; sad experiences. Pages 284-304.

### Box Number 2

<u>Folder No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	<b>Chapter XV:</b> further progress of the yellow fever epidemic; Consul again attacked; Pereine contact; Guzman Blanco assumes power. Pages 304-321.
2	<b>Chapter XVI:</b> appointed British Vice Consul; recommended by Mr. Bunch; sketch of Mr. Bunch; Captain Wright of S.S. "Houssa" eaten by alligators; invasion of locusts; low prices of coffee; agriculture disheartening. Pages 321-347.
3	<b>Chapter XVII:</b> political matters in Venezuela; machinations of Guzman Blanco; new Constitution of 1881; imposition of extra duties; wreck and sale of French bark "Courier;" Mr. Antoine Fabiani.
4	<b>Chapter XVIII:</b> Revolution of General Diaz Bravo; arrival an account of General Venancio Pulgar; H.M.S. "Fantome" anchors and Commander Karslake visits Maracaibo; the American Circus comes and goes. Pages 370-390.
5	<b>Chapter XIX:</b> A Rotterdam reminiscence arrival of another American circus; political changes in Venezuela; accident to the American steamer "Trugillo," and her salvage. Pages

390-411.

## Chapter description continued:

- 6        **Chapter XX:** visit to Caracas; President Guzman Blanco, his capital and court renews acquaintance with Mr. Simon Camacho, Venezuelan Minister to Washington; attacked by dysentery at Maracaibo and ordered to the mountains; arrival at Valera. Pages 411-430.
- 7        **Chapter XXI:** Valera and its' people; receptions; return to Maracaibo; affair of the "Cambronne;" the French bark "Confidence" stranded on Goajira coast and taken by savages; white child among the Goajiras; Indian slavery as practiced at Maracaibo. Pages 430-451.
- 8        **Chapter XXII:** removal of Consular office and residence to the "Casa de los Muerbos;" Crespo becomes president; project of an artificial port at Maracaibo; riot and loss of life. Pages 451-468.
- 9        **Chapter XXIII:** burning of the Norwegian brig "Maria;" Consul builds residence in suburbs of Empedrado; guat improvement in this section. Page 469-488.
- 10       **Chapter XXIV:** completes new home and leaves for New York; meets family returning from Europe; returns to Maracaibo and receives notice of son's death; requested to serve as United States Consul only; had been Consul of nearly every civilized nation--England, France, Belgium, German Empire, Denmark, Columbian Republic, Sweden, and Norway. Pages 488-510.
- 11       **Chapter XXV:** Consul's wife and daughter visit Maracaibo; celebration of Centennial of General Paez; Dr. Rojas Paul elected President of Venezuela; President and Superintendent of Venezuelan Development Company arrive at Maracaibo from Omaha; trip to Goajira Peninsula. Pages 510-536.
- 12       **Chapter XXVI:** trip to Capatarida, the State Capital; celebration of Centennial of General Urdaneta; fruitless effort of Venezuelan Development Company with Guzman Blanco; scandalous immigration swindle proposed by Blanco but rejected by Congress. Pages 536-550.
- 13       **Chapter XXVII:** reaction against Guzman Blanco; cases of

yellow fever among shipping at Maracaibo and Norwegian brig  
loses several lives. Pages 550-572.

**Chapter description continued:**

- 14        **Chapter XXVIII:** arrival of Dr. Savelle of Omaha; assassination of General Chavez; exciting incidents of the return from Paraguapoo on account of hostile Indians. Pages 572-597.
- 15        **Chapter XXIX:** the Goajira Peninsula and its' inhabitants; peculiar customs, dress and ornaments; stock raising. Pages 597-627.
- 16        **Chapter XXX:** policy of President Rojas Paul; Zulia recovers state autonomy; threatened revolution; provisional state government under General Ramon Arjola; discourteous treatment of Consular Corps by General Arjola; Consul receives notice of appointment of successor. Pages 627-648.